

SMOKE BELLEW

By
JACK
LONDON

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Syndicate

SYNOPSIS.

Christopher Bellew, a tenderfoot, starts for the Klondike in a gold rush and pluck. By work at the back breaking tail of packing freight.

He meets a beautiful girl, Joy Gastell, who is his own partner, and he and Shorty, a wealthy prospector, Joy has nicknamed him "Smoke."

Smoke and Shorty befriend a man named Brock and nearly perish in the snowstorm on Lake Lebarge because of the uselessness of their employers.

Smoke and Shorty take command by force and get through to Dawson City, where they are discharged. On Brock's tip they stampede for Squaw Creek.

They overtake Joy Gastell and her father. To help the Sea Lion crowd Joy treacherously leads them away from Squaw Creek.

Smoke saves the girl's feet from freezing. He and Shorty by mistake jump on a miner's claim and lose it. Then Smoke finds Surprise lake, the bottom of which is covered with gold.

Smoke is shot at, witnesses the murder of a miner by the unknown marksmen and is arrested for murder himself.

Smoke goes to Surprise lake. He falls into a crevasse in a glacier, and a miner, Carson, makes heroic efforts to rescue him.

Smoke cuts a rope to save Carson, falls himself and is caught in a pocket below, from which he is rescued by Carson and Joy.

Smoke and Shorty find a tribe of starving Indians, and Smoke goes to Muelich to secure food and help.

Eyes centered on him, and smoke began to fall. He tried to speak, pulled off his mittens, which fell dangling from their cords, and clawed at the frozen moisture of his breath which had formed in fifty miles of running.

Only the man at the craps table, without turning his head, continued to roll the dice and to cry: "Oh, you Joe! Come on, you Joe!" The gamekeeper's gaze, fixed on Smoke, caught the player's attention, and he, too, with suspended dice, turned and looked.

"What's up, Smoke?" Matson, the owner of the Annie Mine, demanded.

With a last effort Smoke unlocked his mouth from "I got some dogs out there—dead best," he said huskily.

"Somebody got and take care of them, and I'll tell you what's the matter."

In a dozen brief sentences he outlined the situation. The craps player, his money still lying on the table and his slippery Joe Cotton still uncaptured, had come over to Smoke and was now the first to speak.

"We gotta do something. That's straight. But what? You've had time to think. What's your plan? Spit it out!"

"Sure," Smoke assented. "We've got to bustle light sleds on the jump. Say 100 pounds of grub on each sled. The driver's outfit and dog grub will fetch it up fifty more. But they can make time. Say we start five of these sleds—best running teams, best mushers and trail riders. On the soft trail the sleds can take the lead turn about. They've got to start at once. At the best, by the time they can get there all those Indians won't have had a scrap to eat for three days."

"And then as soon as we've got those sleds off we'll have to follow up with heavy sleds. Figure it out yourself. Two pounds a day is the very least we can decently keep those Indians traveling on. That's 400 pounds a day, and with the old people and the children five days is the quickest time we can bring them into Muelich. Now, what are you going to do?"

"Take up a collection to buy all the grub," said the craps player. "Fetch a washbasin, somebody. It won't take a minute. An' here's a starter."

He pulled a heavy gold sack from his pocket, untied the mouth and poured a stream of coarse dust and nuggets into the basin. A man beside him caught his hand up with a jerk and an oath, elevating the mouth of the sack so as to stop the run of the dust. To a casual eye six or eight ounces had already run into the basin.

"Don't be a hawk!" cried the second man. "You ain't the only one with a poke. Gimme a chance at it."

Men crowded and jostled for the opportunity to contribute, and when they were satisfied Smoke hefted the heavy basin with both hands and grunted:

"It will keep the whole tribe in grub for the rest of the winter," he said.

"Now for the dogs. Five light teams that have some run in them."

A dozen teams were volunteered, and the camp, as a committee of the whole bickered and debated, accepted and rejected.

As fast as a team was selected its owner, with half a dozen aids, departed to harness up and get ready.

One team was rejected because it had come in tired that afternoon. One owner contributed his team, but apologetically exposed a bandaged ankle that prevented him from driving it. This team Smoke took, overriding the objection of the crowd that he was played out.

Long Bill Haskell pointed out that while Fat Olsen's team was a crackerjack, Fat Olsen himself was an elephant. Fat Olsen's 240 pounds of heartiness was indignant. Tears of anger came into his eyes, and his Teutonic explosions could not be stopped until he was given a place in the heavy division, the craps player jumping at the chance to take out Olsen's light team.

Five teams were accepted and were being harnessed and loaded, but only four drivers had satisfied the committee of the whole.

"There's Cullis George," some one cried. "He's a trail eater, and he's fresh and rested."

All eyes turned upon the Indian, but his face was expressionless, and he said nothing.

"You'll take a team?" Smoke said to him.

Still the big Indian made no answer. As with an electric thrill it ran through all of them that something untoward was impending. A restless shifting of the group took place, forming a circle in which Smoke and Cullis George faced each other. And Smoke realized that by common consent he had been made the representative of his fellows in what was taking place.

Also he was angered. It was beyond him that any human creature, a witless to the scramble of volunteers, should hang back. For another thing, in what followed Smoke did not have Cullis George's point of view—did not dream that the Indian held back for any reason save the selfish, mercenary one.

"Of course you will take a team," Smoke said.

"How much?" Cullis George asked.

A snarl, spontaneous and general, grated in the throats and twisted the mouths of the miners.

"Wait a bit, boys," Smoke cried. "Maybe he doesn't understand. Look here, George. Don't you see, nobody is charging anything. They're giving everything to save 200 Indians from starving to death? He paused to let it sink home.

"How much?" said Cullis George.

"Wait, you fellows! Now listen, George. We don't want you to make any mistake. These starving people are your kind of people. They're an other tribe, but they're Indians just the same. Now, you've seen what the white men are doing—conquering over their dust, giving their dogs and sleds falling over one another to hit the trail. Only the best men can go with the first sleds. Look at Fat Olsen there. He was ready to fight because they wouldn't let him go. You ought to be mighty proud because all men think you a No. 1 musher. It isn't a case of how much, but how quick."

"Kill him!" Burt his head. "Fat and feathers!" were several of the ones in the wild medley that went up. The spirit of philanthropy and good fellowship changed to brute savagery on the instant.

In the storm center Cullis George stood imperturbable, while Smoke burst back the fiercest and shouted:

"Wait! Who's running this? The humor died away. "Fetch a rope," he added quietly.

Cullis George shrugged his shoulders. He knew this white man bred. He had talked on trail with it and eaten its flour and bacon and beans too long not to know it. It was a law abiding breed. He knew that though roughly, it always punished the man who broke the law. But he had broken no law. He knew his law. He had lived up to it. He had neither murdered, stolen nor lied.

There was nothing in the white man's law against charging a price and driving a bargain. They all charged a price and drove bargains. He was doing nothing more than that, and it was the thing they had taught him. Besides, if he wasn't good enough to drink with them, then he was not good enough to be charitable with them nor to join them in any of their foolish diversions.

Neither Smoke nor any man there glimpsed what lay in Cullis George's brain, behind his attitude and prompting his attitude. Though they did not know it, they were as befuddled as he in the matter of mutual understanding. To them he was a selfish brute; to him they were selfish brutes.

When the rope was brought Long Bill Haskell, Fat Olsen and the craps player, with much awkwardness and angry haste, got the slipnoose around the Indian's neck and rove the rope over a rafter. At the other end a dozen men tugged on, ready to hoist away.

Nor had Cullis George resisted. He knew it for what it was—bluff. The whites were strong on bluff. Was not draw poker their favorite game? Did they not buy and sell and make all bargains with bluff? Yes; he had seen a white man do business with a look on his face of four aces and in his hand a busted straight.

"Wait," Smoke commanded. "The hands. We don't want him climbing."

More bluff. Cullis George decided, and passively permitted his hands to be tied behind his back.

"Now it's your last chance, George," said Smoke. "Will you take out the team?"

"How much?" said Cullis George.

As though at himself that he should be able to do such a thing and at the same time angered by the colossal selfishness of the Indian, Smoke gave the signal. Nor was Cullis George any less astounded when he felt the noose tighten with a jerk and swing him off the floor. His stolidity broke on the instant. On his face, in quick succession, appeared surprise, dismay and pain.

Smoke watched anxiously. Having never been hanged himself, he felt a

tyro at the business. The "hook" struggled convulsively, the tied hands strove to burst their bonds, and from the throat came unpleasant noises of strangulation. Smoke held up his hands.

"Slack away!" he ordered.

Grumbling at the shortness of the punishment, the men on the rope lowered Cullis George to the floor. His eyes were bulging, and he was tottery on his feet, swaying from side to side and still making a faint with his hands. Smoke divined what was the matter—thrill violent fingers between the rope and the neck and brought the noose slack with a jerk. With a great heave of the chest Cullis George got his first breath.

"Will you take that team out?" Smoke demanded.

Cullis George did not answer. He was too busy breathing.

"Oh, we white men are hogs," Smoke blurted in the interval, resentful himself at the part he was compelled to play.

"We'd sell our souls for gold and all that. But once in awhile we forget about it and turn loose and do something without a thought of how much there is in it. And when we do that, Cullis George, watch out. What we want to know is, are you going to take out that team?"

Cullis George debated with himself. He was no coward. Perhaps this was the extent of their bluff, and if he gave in now he was a fool. And while he debated Smoke suffered from secret worry lest this stubborn aborigine would persist in being hanged.

"How much?" said Cullis George.

Smoke started to raise his hand for the signal.

"Me no!" Cullis George said very quickly before the rope could tighten.

"An' when that rescue expedition found me," Shorty told it in the Annie Mine, "that ornery Cullis George was the first in, beatin' Smoke's sled by three hours. An' don't you forget it. Smoke comes in second at that. Just the same, it was about time, when I heard Cullis George yellin' at his dogs from the top of the divide, for those blamed Swishes had ate my moccasins, my mitts, the leather on my knife sheath an' some of my was beginnin' to look mighty hungry at me—me bel'n' better noursed, you see."

"An' Smoke? He was dead. He bustled around awhile, helps to start a meal for them 200 sufferin' Swishes, an' then he fell asleep, snoring like his hanches, thinkin' he was rovin' snow into a thawin' pail. I fixed him my bed, an' when me if I didn't have to help him into it, he was that give out."

"Sure I win the toothpicks. Didn't them dogs just naturally need the six salmon Smoke fed 'em at the noonin'?"

CHAPTER XVII.

The Mistake of Creation.

"WHAT!" Smoke yelled at the dogs, throwing his weight back on the gee pole to bring the sled to a halt.

"What's eatin' you now?" Shorty complained. "They ain't no water under that footin'."

"No, but look at that trail cutting out to the right," Smoke answered. "I thought nobody was wintering in this section."

"First I heard of anybody up the Nordbergs," Shorty said, staring at the all but obliterated track. "Maybe they are hunters an' pulled their freight long ago."

"No," Smoke decided. "There's been travel both ways, but the last travel was up that creek. Whoever they are, they're there now. There's been no travel for weeks. Now what's been keeping them there all the time? Let's follow the track up the creek. There's plenty of dead timber. We can camp any time."

"Sure, we can camp any time, but we got to travel most of the time if we ain't goin' to starve, an' we got to travel in the right direction."

"It won't make the trip a day longer," Smoke urged. "Possibly no more than a mile longer."

"Men has died for as little as a mile," Shorty retorted. "Get up, you poor sorefoots, you—get up! How! You Bright! How!"

The lead dog obeyed, and the whole team strained weakly into the soft snow.

"Whoa!" Shorty yelled. "It's pack trail."

Smoke pulled his snowshoes from under the sled lashings, bound them to his moccasined feet and went to the fore to press and pack the light surface for the dogs.

It was heavy work. Dogs and men had been for days on short rations, and few and limited were the reserves of energy they could call upon. The high rocky walls quickly drew near together, so that their way led up near the bottom of a narrow gorge.

"It's a trap," Shorty said. "The whole lot of it is rotten. It's a hole in the ground. It's the stampin' ground of trouble."

Smoke made no reply, and for half an hour they toiled on in silence that was again broken by Shorty.

"She's a workin'," he grumbled. "She's sure a workin', an' I'll tell you if you're minded to hear an' listen."

"Go on," Smoke answered.

"Well, she tells me, plain an' simple, that we ain't never goin' to get out of this hole in the ground in days an' days. We're goin' to find trouble an' get stuck in here a long time an' then some."

"Does she say anything about grub?" We haven't grub for days and days and days, and then some. There's the beginning of your trouble," Smoke said, halting on his snowshoes and staring at an object that lay on one side of the old trail.

Shorty left the gee pole and joined him, and together they gazed down on the body of a man beside the trail.

"Well fed," said Smoke.

"Look at them lips," said Shorty.

"Stiff as a poker," said Smoke, lifting an arm that without moving moved the whole body.

The man lay on his side, solidly frozen. From the fact that no snow powdered him it was patent that he had lain there but a short time.

"There was a general fall of snow three days back," said Shorty.

Smoke nodded, bending over the corpse, twisting it half up to face them and pointing to a bullet wound in the temple. He glanced to the side and tilted his head at a revolver that lay on top of the snow.

A hundred yards farther on they came upon a second body that lay face downward in the trail. "Two things are pretty clear," Smoke said. "They're fat. That means no famine. They've not struck it rich, else they wouldn't have committed suicide."

"If they did," Shorty objected.

"They certainly did. There are no tracks besides their own, and each is powder burned." Smoke dragged the corpse to one side and with the toe of his moccasin nosed a revolver out of the snow into which it had been pressed by the body. "That's what did the work. I told you we'd find something."

"From the looks of it we ain't startin' at yet. Now, wherd' two fat geezers want to kill themselves for?"

"When we find that out we'll have found the rest of your trouble," Smoke answered. "Come on. It's blowing hard."

Quite dark it was when Smoke's snowshoe tripped him over a body. He fell on a sled on which lay another body, and when he had dug the snow out of his neck and struck a match he and Shorty glimpsed a third body, wrapped in blankets, lying beside a partially dug grave; also, ere the match flickered out, they caught sight of half a dozen additional graves.

"B-r-r-r!" Shorty shivered. "Suicide Camp. Ah! fed up. I reckon they're all dead."

"No. Perhaps that. Smoke was looking farther along at a dim glimmer of light. "And there's another light—and a third one there. Come on. Let's hike."

No more corpses delayed them, and in several minutes, over a hard packed trail, they were in camp.

"It's a city," Shorty whispered. "There must be twenty cabins. An' not a dog. Ain't that funny?"

"And that explains it," Smoke whispered back excitedly. "It's the Laura Ribley outfit. Don't you remember? Came up the Yukon last fall on the Port Townsend No. 6. Went right by Dawson without stopping. The steamers must have landed them at the mouth of the creek."

"Sure, I remember. They was Mor mons."

"No vegetarians," Smoke grinned in the darkness. They won't eat meat and they won't work dogs."

"It's all the same. I knowed they was somethin' funny about 'em. Had the all wise steer to the yellow. That Laura Ribley was goin' to take em right to the spot where they'd all be millionaires."

"Yes; she was their seers—had visions and that sort of stuff. I thought they went up the Nordbergs."

"Huh! Listen to that!"

Shorty's hand in the darkness went out warily to Smoke's chest, and together they listened to a groan, deep and long drawn, that came from one of the cabins. Ere it could die away it was taken up by another cabin and another—a vast suspiration of human misery. The effect was monstrous and nightmarish.

"B-r-r-r!" Shorty shivered. "It's gettin' me goin'. Let's break in an' find what's eatin' 'em."

Smoke knocked at a lighted cabin and was followed in by Shorty in an answer to the "Come in" of the voice they heard groaning.

"What's the matter?" Smoke demanded of one whose blankets could not hide his broad shoulders and massively muscled body, but whose eyes were pain racked and whose cheeks were hollow. "Smallpox? What is it?"

In reply the man pointed at his mouth, spreading black and swollen lips in the effort, and Smoke recoiled at the sight.

"Scurvy," he muttered to Shorty, and the man confirmed the diagnosis with a nod of the head.

"Plenty of grub?" Shorty asked.

"Yep," was the answer from a man in another bunk. "Help yourself. There's sashers of it. The cabin next on the other side is empty. Cache is right alongside. Wade into it."

In every cabin they visited that night they found a similar situation. Scurvy had smitten the whole camp. Originally there had been ninety-three men and women. But ten had died, and two had recently disappeared. Smoke told of finding the two and expressed surprise that none had gone that short distance down the trail to find out for themselves. What particularly struck him and Shorty was the helplessness of these people. Their cabins were littered and dirty. A cab's troubles were their own troubles, and already they had ceased from the exertion of burying their dead.

"It's almost weird," Smoke confided to Shorty. "I've met shirkers and loafers, but I never met so many all at one time. You heard what they said. They've never done a tap. I'll bet they haven't washed their own faces. No wonder they got scurvy."

"But vegetarians don't ought to get scurvy," Shorty contended. "It's the salt meat eaters that's supposed to fall for it. And they don't eat meat, salt or fresh, raw or cooked, or any other way."

Smoke shook his head. "I know. And it's vegetable diet that cures scurvy. No drugs will do it. Vegetables, especially potatoes, are the only dose. But don't forget one thing, Shorty: we are not up against a theory, but a condition. The fact is these grass eaters have all got scurvy."

"Must be contagious."

"No. That the doctors do know. Scurvy is not a germ disease. It can't be caught. It's generated. As near as I can get it, it's due to an impoverished condition of the blood. Its cause is not something they've got, but something they haven't got. A man gets scurvy for lack of certain chemicals in his blood, and those chemicals don't come out of powders and bottles, but do come out of vegetables."

(Continued next week)

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Legal Notices

STATE OF MICHIGAN IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF WAYNE IN CHANCERY

In re proceedings for the dissolution of Chippewa Construction Company, Inc., an Intervening Judgment Creditors Bill of John McBride and Jake Goffman et al. vs. Chippewa Construction Co., No. 1232.

NOTICE OF CHANCERY SALE. In pursuance of an order of the Circuit Court for the County of Wayne in Chancery made and entered on the 12th day of November, A. D. 1915, and of supplementary order dated January 15th, A. D. 1916, in the above entitled cause, the undersigned, Detroit Trust Company, Receiver of the Chippewa Construction Company, a Michigan corporation, will sell public such real estate, to the highest bidder at the southerly or Congress Street entrance of the Wayne County Building in the City of Detroit in said County of Wayne, on the 28th day of March, A. D. 1916, at 12 o'clock noon of said day, all of the property and assets of said Chippewa Construction Company, including real estate, and interest in real estate, all personal property, rights, franchises, accounts, things in action, and all and every description of property, whatsoever, belonging to said Company, except cash in hands of said Receiver. Full information as to the terms of the sale and detailed description of the property and assets of said Chippewa Construction Company can be obtained from the Receiver at its office, corner of Fort and Shelby Streets in said City of Detroit.

In further pursuance of said order of said Court in said cause, said Receiver will within three days after such sale report to said Court the result thereof and a hearing on such report will be had for the purpose of confirming the same or otherwise on the second Saturday next after such sale at 9:30 o'clock in the forenoon at the Circuit Court Room in the Wayne County Building in the said City of Detroit, before the Honorable Phillip T. Van Zile, one of the Judges of said Court.

Detroit Trust Company, Receiver Consolidated Light & Power Company. 15-7-e

STATE OF MICHIGAN IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF WAYNE IN CHANCERY

National Light & Power Co., Complainant vs. Consolidated Light & Power Co., Defendant. No. 4438.

NOTICE OF CHANCERY SALE. In pursuance of an order of the Circuit Court for the County of Wayne in Chancery made and entered on the 12th day of November, A. D. 1915, and of supplementary order dated January 15th, 1916, in the above entitled cause, the undersigned, Detroit Trust Company, Receiver of the Consolidated Light & Power Company, a Michigan corporation, will sell public such real estate, to the highest bidder at the southerly or Congress Street entrance of the Wayne County Building in the City of Detroit in said County of Wayne, on the 28th day of March, A. D. 1916, at 12 o'clock noon of said day, all of the property and assets of the said Consolidated Light & Power Company, including real estate and interest in real estate, all personal property, rights, franchises, accounts, things in action, and all and every description of property, whatsoever, belonging to said Company, except cash in hands of said Receiver. Full information as to the terms of the sale and detailed description of the property and assets of the said Consolidated Light & Power Company can be obtained from the Receiver at its office, corner of Fort and Shelby Streets, in the said City of Detroit.

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